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ABSTRACT

These essays are the first of an annual series that brings to the public the distinctive views and approaches of the humanities to urgent issues of the day. David Rothman, in "Lessons from an Opium Eater," examines how the nineteenth-century confessions of a famous English opium addict, Thomas De Quincey, has relevance to the present, how it might be used to help find solutions to the current problem of drug abuse. Ann Henderson offers a commentary on the issue of drug abuse and public policy. Joan Scott, in "The History of Families," argues that, far from being fixed and immutable, the family is a varied, changing, adaptable institution. Whether women work to support their families or to find meaningful, productive activity, or both, their wage-earning activity does not in itself disrupt family stability or impoverish their children emotionally. Rather, the attempt to impose idealized models of the family on diverse and changing families undercuts their ability to adapt to changing economic and social circumstances and so to survive. Margaret Kingsland adds a commentary that focuses on the issue of day care. Donald Worster in "Devastating Nature" examines some of the threats to the environment and relates them to the changing values and ideals of modern society. If society wants to stop the devastation of the earth, it must be willing to change itself. David Tebaldi's commentary illustrates the distinction between the anthropocentric and the biocentric view of nature and the environment. An appendix lists addresses for humanities councils in all 50 states. (JB)

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The Humanities and the Art of Public Discussion

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The Humanities and the Art of Public Discussion

Essays and Commentaries:

"Lessons from an Opium Eater"
David J. Rothman, Ann Henderson

"The History of Families"
Joan Wallach Scott, Margaret Kingsland

"Devastating Nature"
Donald E. Worster, David Tebaldi

Essays by Humanities Scholars:

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Bernard Schoenberg Professor of Social Medicine and Director of the Center for the Study of Society and Medicine at Columbia. Publications: *The Willowbrook Wars*, Co-author with Sheila Rothman (New York: Harper & Row, September 1984); *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America* (Boston: Little Brown & Co. 1980); *Social History and Social Policy*, Co-editor with Stanton Wheeler (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1980).

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Foreword

"Policy" is a magnificently complex word, difficult to define, not particularly friendly. It implies a science of legislation that belongs to the expert, to the lawmaker. Yet we see it everywhere, use it casually, read editorials about it, question political candidates about it. For all of that, few of us really understand what policy means or how it is developed. Most of us wonder, if we think about it at all, what the creation of policy has to do with the ordinary citizen.

As the following essays attest, everything. Using the perspectives of the humanities, the writers offer a context for understanding some of the most important public issues of our time: drug abuse, child care, and the environment. These issues touch us all. Our future as a nation depends in part on how we respond to the particular challenges these dilemmas pose.

There are no final answers to these problems, which is another way of saying that there are many answers. Picking the right one is ultimately a personal choice. When the society adopts that choice, it becomes public policy. How do we make the right choice?

As individuals and as communities, we can turn to the humanities for help — to history, philosophy, literature, and other bodies of knowledge. The humanities are dynamic: they are ways of thinking through issues and learning what it is we believe, and why. They are an exploration of our truths, our judgments, our experience, our knowledge, and our wisdom. The humanities are found in books, yes, but they are also found outside of books. (A favorite humanities entry through the ages is a 2,600-year-old poem that was told to the accompaniment of a lyre for audiences who could not read and only later was written down as a "book" — Homer's *Odyssey*.) The humani-

ties are about quality of conversation, discourse that pairs passion and belief with reason and reflection. The humanities are user-friendly; they are the tools of citizenship.

As we think and talk about urgent national issues, the humanities help us to separate mere opinion from discernment and judgment. They make room for the voice of history and experience. They give meaning to seemingly unconnected facts. They give us a bigger picture in which to place things. In short, the humanities give us an intelligent start in going about the business of a democracy: constructing wise laws to meet the needs of people in communities.

These essays, however, written by scholars in the humanities, are not about laws. They are about people, facts, values, and the past. They are about us. They present, in each case, a personal viewpoint. They are offered to the American public in the spirit of continuing the conversations, not ending them. Whatever significance they may have will depend on how you wish to use them. We hope you will do so.

These essays are the first of an annual series being produced by the Federation of State Humanities Councils that will bring to the American public the distinctive views and approaches of the humanities to urgent issues of the day. We would like to express our appreciation to each author for their contributions.

Humanities Councils, one in each state (see the Appendix for a complete listing), are private nonprofit organizations that make small grants to support humanities programs for the public in communities across the country. They receive funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and other sources. Many Humanities Councils make grants to support thoughtful discussion about public policy from the perspective of the humanities. For further information, contact the Humanities Council in your state, or the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

Jamil S. Zainaldin
President
Federation of State Humanities Councils

Lessons from an Opium Eater

by David J. Rothman

In 1821, Thomas De Quincey, the son of an English textile manufacturer and himself an Oxford dropout, published his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, one of the first texts to describe, with exquisite ambivalence, the perils and delights of drug use. His account was exceptionally, and purposefully, contradictory. He apologized for writing the essay, for lifting the "decent drapery" to expose his secret life, conceding that "guilt and misery shrink, by a natural instinct, from public notice." He characterized his addiction as "an accursed chain which fettered me," and enforced "a captivity so servile." But all the while, he admitted to keen pleasures. His addiction was a "fascinating enthrallment," for opium possessed "fascinating powers" as one of the "divine luxuries."[1]

De Quincey remembered and recounted the minute details of his introduction to opium, describing it as others did their conversion experience to saving grace. "It was a Sunday afternoon wet and cheerless: and a duller spectacle this earth of ours has not to show," when he entered "the Paradise of opium eaters." Suffering from an acutely painful toothache, he went to a "dull and stupid" druggist who dispensed the tincture of opium, and thereby served as the "unconscious minister of celestial pleasures." With one dose of the opium, De Quincey discovered that "Happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat pocket."[2]

De Quincey reported that for eight years, from 1804 to 1813, he took opium two times a week, and was enthralled by it. He insisted that opium was superior to alcohol and other spirits. "Wine disorders the mental faculties, opium on the

contrary . . . introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony. Wine robs a man of his self-possession: opium greatly invigorates it." To borrow a technical distinction from medicine, wine gives an acute pleasure, opium a chronic one; "the one is a flame, the other a steady and equable glow." Accordingly, De Quincey was neither surprised nor displeased that the English working class was substituting opium for alcohol. He complacently reported that several Manchester cotton manufacturers had informed him that their workers "were rapidly getting into the practice of opium eating," and that "on a Saturday afternoon the counters of the druggists were filled with pills . . . in preparation for the known demand of the evening." The immediate stimulus for the change was a drop in wages — since opium was cheaper than ale or whiskey, the workers turned to it. But, De Quincey commented, do not think that when wages climb the workers will abandon opium: "I do not readily believe that any man, having once tasted the divine luxuries of opium, will afterwards descend to the gross and mortal enjoyments of alcohol."[3]

The second half of the *Confessions* tells a very different tale. In 1813, De Quincey began taking daily doses of opium, and his account of his addiction over the next eight years turns grim. The sections devoted to "The Pains of Opium" are more disjointed than the earlier narrative, but they fully spell out his "acutest suffering." The drug had "palsying effects on the intellectual faculties. . . . I cannot read to myself with any pleasure, hardly with a moment's endurance." In addition to inducing an "intellectual torpor," the addiction led to "the neglect or procrastination of each day's appropriate duties." Worse yet, opium gave De Quincey terrifying nightmares and left him deeply depressed.[4]

The *Confessions* closes with a brief and obscure two-page account of how De Quincey broke his habit. "A crisis arrived for the author's life, and . . . I saw that I must die if I continued the opium: I determined, therefore, if that should be required, to die in throwing it off." Tapering his doses, he managed the task. "I triumphed." He concluded his essay with an admonition to other opium eaters and would-be opium eaters: if he had

taught them "to fear and tremble, enough has been effected."[5]

The historian who reads De Quincey today, when drug abuse ranks among the nation's two or three most pressing domestic concerns, has a marker of just how much has changed in drug addiction over the past 170 years. By comparison to the current situation, De Quincey's accounts and attitudes can seem almost quaint. It is no longer the neighborhood druggist who dispenses opium over the counter on a Saturday night; nor is the typical addict an ex-Oxford student or a factory worker in a textile mill. Supplying and distributing drugs is an international and flourishing underworld activity, and the cocaine and crack addicts will do anything to get their fix, not only preying on others but putting themselves at risk of deadly disease (of which AIDS is only the latest threat) through intravenous injections and shared needles. Indeed, so much seems to have changed that it takes an act of imagination to comprehend how De Quincey could favorably compare drugs to alcohol for bringing a higher degree of order and harmony.

Nevertheless, for all the obvious differences, De Quincey's text is altogether relevant to our own times — and its very timelessness helps define its classic quality. However different the world we inhabit and the problems we confront, this confession of a nineteenth-century addict has much to teach us. In the first instance, De Quincey's account makes altogether clear that addiction is not simply the response of one contemporary social class or group to one particular set of social circumstances. Drug use is so complex and thorny a problem precisely because the drugs themselves are at once captivating and enthralling, humiliating and invigorating. Drug use, to take the contradictions of De Quincey as our guide, may reflect not only on the external condition of daily living but on the human condition — the readiness to take to flight and then suffer the crash, to soar high and plummet low.

Thus, when it comes to drug use, the individual calculus of pleasure and pain is unlikely to be a rational one, a careful measuring of costs and benefits. The opium eaters, and later addicts as well, may lament their plight, even as they remain enmeshed in it. They, and their habits, may not be responsive to a rise in the price of drugs, or to greater drug testing and

surveillance, or even to an increase in penalties. In other words, in the sanction may not lie the solution.

With De Quincey again as our guide, we can appreciate just how difficult it is to find a suitable language with which to depict addiction — and the difficulty of finding the right words is an apt illustration of the difficulty of finding the right public policy. The analogies that came most easily to De Quincey were religious ones: the Sunday conversion that led to finding paradise. But how are we to describe the phenomenon? Should we think of addiction as a disease, the current situation as an epidemic, and invest our resources in the effort to find a medical cure, through pharmacology (methadone for heroin, and some as yet undiscovered "cure" for cocaine and crack)? Should we label drug addiction a vice and search for ways to overcome it, investing heavily in education as though this were any other avoidable habit? Or is addiction a crime, so that the answer rests in putting more money into a better policing of our borders and our streets, securing better conviction rates, and building more prisons so as to be able to incarcerate more people for longer periods? Should we see drug use the predictable response to social disorganization, whether the source is in unemployment, bad housing, family breakup, or inadequate schools, so that we must conceptualize and realize a grander agenda of social reform. Or should we be thinking of drug addiction as part of the human condition, an escape from the pain of life, whether that pain is endemic to a ghetto and the escape route is crack, or to a corporation and the escape route is cocaine? Were this our model, we should be searching for ways simply to limit the impact of drug use on both users and non-users, looking not to invoke harsher penalties but to allow distribution without conferring legitimacy.

Neither the De Quincey text, nor any other classic from the humanities, is likely to provide us with an answer to which of these frames to adopt, but these texts do sensitize us to how language determines outlook, to how naming an entity is anything but a neutral act. Thus, should we speak of the drug user or the drug abuser? If we can hardly go as far as De Quincey in calling the seller of drugs an "unconscious minister," are we altogether confident that the seller is a "pusher"

and not a "provider"?

But if these texts cannot provide solutions, they may provide guidance as we attempt to find solutions, or better put, they may help to free our thinking, suggest possibilities that have been passed over, unleash the imagination to consider possibilities that may not be popular in contemporary policy analysis. To be sure, these resulting approaches will have their own particular emphasis and orientation. In our culture, for reasons that are not difficult to trace, perspectives drawn from the humanities are likely to bring to the considerations of policy a commitment to the centrality of the individual and a commitment to democratic, non-authoritarian ideals. After all, these are the values that underlie many of the classic texts in western civilization, and these are the values that will, perforce, be brought forward to inform the public debate.

Thus, without succumbing to the fallacy that the past is a sure guide to the future or that one individual can stand for all, it may be useful and liberating to remember that there was a time when drugs were available for the asking and that whatever individual pains an addict like De Quincey suffered, the wider society was not corrupted by them. Some contemporary observers notwithstanding, such a policy may not have amounted to "moral surrender," and under it, England did not become a "society of zombies," or the United States, where similar practices held, a setting of "social chaos and disorder."

By the same token, texts like De Quincey's may help to keep ambitions for policy both more realistic and more consistent with other societal values. To declare a "war" on drugs and appoint a drug "czar" or "general" to spearhead it warrants a series of cautionary notes. War suggests unqualified victory, a battle in which surrender cannot be eliminated once and for all, and an overambitious program can fail of its own weight. In fact, analogies drawn from czars and wars may carry dangers of their own. Wartimes are not good times for civil liberties (whether the president is Abraham Lincoln or Franklin Roosevelt), and czars should have no place in democratic societies, drug crisis or not. The better part of wisdom may be to set forth more modest aims under more democratic forms of leadership.

At the same time, it may prove helpful to consider the

possibilities of individual solutions, both in terms of education and treatment. To be sure, in this arena especially, goals will have to be prudently circumscribed. De Quincey himself acknowledged the possibility that the reader of his text would come away more attracted to the prospect of enjoying opium than frightened about the iron prison of addiction. ("He may say that the issue of my case is at least a proof that opium, after seventeen-year's use, and eight-year's abuse of its powers, may still be renounced: and that *he* may chance to bring to the task greater energy than I did.")[6] But if education seems a slow and cumbersome process and the appeal of drugs too great for at least some to resist, it surely remains one of our best hopes for a long-term solution and is most consistent with our values and commitments. Recall, too, that De Quincey did escape his addiction, that we generally do hold to the notion of the redemption of the individual, and in keeping with these judgments, addicts ought to be afforded the opportunity to alter their life-styles. All this, of course, makes it difficult to reconcile the rhetoric of a war on drugs with the glaring lack of investment in rehabilitation and treatment centers.

Moreover, it becomes ever so tempting to suggest (no stronger word will do) that public policy should at the least experiment with some effort at decriminalizing some of the drugs now labeled illegal. The objections are certainly not frivolous, and initiatives would have to be introduced carefully and scrupulously evaluated. There are many possible models to follow (from prescription writing to state-run distribution centers). But it is unpersuasive to refute arguments in favor of such an experiment by invoking the principle of paternalism — that the state should act in the best interests of the citizenry — when that paternalism results in addicts being confined to overcrowded and often brutal jails and prisons.

Finally, and perhaps most important, one comes away from a reading of De Quincey's text with a heightened sense of the need for commitment. Rather than promote complacency and resignation in light of the fact that addiction has a long history, *Confessions* makes us acutely aware of what is elemental to addiction — the terror of the entrapment and the inability to escape without a helping hand. It also serves as a reminder that

addiction affects people in very different circumstances. De Quincey was responsible only to himself. Through chance, in the person of a friend with financial resources, he was able to purchase the opium he craved without difficulty, and as a young and unattached man, it was only his own future that was at stake. But for most drug users today, feeding the habit inevitably leads to criminal behavior; and the addict may well be a young woman of childbearing age, or pregnant with several other children at home, so that her behavior has the gravest implications for others. And one cannot forget that in the shadow of the AIDS epidemic, addiction now frequently carries a death sentence. Thus, everyone who comes in contact with the addict, whether at home, or in a hospital, or on the street, is exposed to many of the same dangers that the addict confronts.

To ignore these risks, to do nothing in face of the predicament, would violate not only self-interest but the core values in our society. Our commitment to the individual is not a pretext for neglect. Although we seek to preserve the autonomy of the individual, we recognize the obligations of mutual responsibility, whether the context is education, social welfare, or health care. Thus, the question becomes not whether to act but how to ensure that the action is at once humane, wise, and effective.

David J. Rothman is Bernard Schoenberg Professor of Social Medicine and Director of the Center for the Study of Society and Medicine at the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University.

1 Thomas De Quincy, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Oxford Press edition: New York, 1985), pp. 2-4.
2 *Ibid*, 38-39.
3 *Ibid*, pp. 40, 3.
4 *Ibid*, pp. 63-67.
5 *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.
6 *Ibid*, p. 79.

Commentary

Sometime after World War II, Mario Puzo's fictional Italian "godfathers" deliberate about entering a new business venture — drugs. Don Corleone, long wary of drug trafficking, observes: "I think this drug business will destroy us in the years to come. There is too much strong feeling about such traffic in this country. It's not like whiskey or gambling or even women, which most people want and is forbidden them by the church and the government. But drugs are dangerous for everyone connected with them."

In the end Corleone bows to his fellow dons and their concern: unless the organization takes over, the people they are responsible for will get involved with the drug business and get hurt. The dons swear they will not permit drugs to be sold to children, but only to "the dark people," who are "the best customers, the least troublesome and they are animals anyway. . . . Let them lose their souls with drugs."

We have all now discovered how wrong the dons were. No one can be insulated from the drug business, even those who control the supply. Drug abuse and its subsidiary industries, drug production and distribution, reach beyond the boundaries of any one community or nation. The magnitude of the problem and the difficult policy choices we face cannot be overstated. As one of Puzo's godfathers comments, "Something has to be done. We just can't let people do as they please and make trouble for everyone."

Or can we? To read *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* is to be reminded that addiction is a part of the human condition. For a variety of reasons — patent medicines, over-the-counter drugs, Civil War veterans with chronic medical prob-

lems — proportionally more Americans abused drugs in the late nineteenth century than do today. And society did not crumble.

Today the immediate emotional reaction to the word "drug" is negative. For many, it means horrors — cocaine, crack, heroin. For others, it includes such addictions as tobacco and alcohol. Meanwhile, historians such as Sidney Mintz remind us that food substances can function as drugs, as did the sugar, tea, and coffee that were introduced into the seventeenth-century European diet. Could it be that just as our national addiction to cocaine and heroin has created an international underground industry, the seventeenth-century European craving for sugar accelerated the spread of slavery and an exploitative system of colonialism?

Complicating it all is what Francis Bacon called "the babble of the marketplace." Knowing not what we mean, we do not know if there is any meaning to it at all. Language and the meanings words hold for us are basic components of this national debate. As Thucydides warned, "a nation falls apart not when men take up arms against each other, but when key words do not mean the same thing to the majority of citizens." What are we saying when we refer to drugs and addiction? And how are these terms logically and emotionally tied to public policy?

In *Higher Learning in the Nation's Service*, Ernest Boyer and Fred Hechinger write that our "public policy circuits appear to be dangerously overloaded." Faced with complex public issues, Americans seek simple solutions. We turn to "repressive censorship, align ourselves with narrowly focused special interest groups, retreat into nostalgia for a world that never was, succumb to the blandishments of glib election soothsayers, or worst of all, simply withdraw completely, convinced that nothing can be done." Boyer and Hechinger wonder if we Americans can resolve together public policy issues so long as we do not have the language to talk together.

Boyer and Hechinger call upon the university to provide the necessary language training. Regardless of the time lag implicit in this request, the university's proclivity for breaking apart into specialized languages makes this a council of de-

spair. A more likely and ready hope is in public humanities efforts, notably the programs sponsored by the state humanities councils. Here there is more informal, more effective, and more widespread access to civic literacy. Discussion and dialogue, essential to a democracy, are the chief characteristics of public humanities programs. Each state possesses one of these state humanities councils, where public voices are dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage and creating our common destiny.

Public policy grows out of our most deeply held values. The contribution of the humanities to public policy formation is to go behind our immediate responses and solutions to reveal those values. When we properly understand that for some of us "human dignity," for others "individual autonomy," and for still others "welfare of the society" are the basis for action and response, we are on the road to developing wise, long-lasting policies.

Most North Americans have a poor grasp of abstract ideals. We lack the language to express our values. We find ourselves bogged down in particulars without knowing how to comprehend the moral scope of our policy decisions. National Issues Forums address this problem by providing the format to ascertain the opinions of our neighbors. Public humanities programs, sponsored by state humanities councils, provide a vehicle through which we can learn to articulate our own values. These are the means at hand to recover the skills of discussion and dialogue.

Ann Henderson
Executive Director
Florida Endowment for the Humanities

For Further Reading

Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*

David Musto, *The Great Drug Debate*

Ethan A. Nadelmann, "The Case for Legalization," John Kaplan, "Taking Drugs Seriously," and Peter Reuter, "Can the Borders Be Sealed?" in *The Public Interest* (Number 92, Summer 1988)

The History of Families

by Joan Wallach Scott

The last few years have witnessed cries of alarm about the family from a wide spectrum of social opinion. Opponents of child care legislation and proponents of Right-to-Life claim that they are defending the family against forces of destruction and moral erosion. Liberals bemoan the "emptying family," referring to the family as an endangered species which must be protected if it is to be saved. The conservative and liberal views usually share two assumptions. First, both see the family as a fixed, immutable institution, whether they believe with religious fundamentalists that its shape was divinely ordained or, with liberals, that a particular historical configuration *ought* to be retained. Second, each view assigns a causal role in family breakdown to a change in women's activities, usually the massive entry into the paid labor force of married women with young children at home.

I want to argue that both assumptions are incorrect when viewed from a historical perspective. Drawing on evidence mainly from European and American history, I will show that families have always been flexible and changing, not fixed institutions, and that labor force participation by married women is compatible with many kinds of family structures and with the successful raising of children.

Families

Let us begin with the family. Investigations by historians and anthropologists have shown that there is no single definition or uniform standard for family organization. The ideal of a family and of appropriate roles for family members has varied over time, across cultures, and among classes within a society.

Moreover, there is always a discrepancy in any society between ideals and lived experience. Some sociologists estimate, in fact, that at any single moment only 25 to 40 percent of families live up to idealized norms.

The ideal of a family as a nuclear household with two parents and their children is a relatively recent development. That definition emphasizes a division of labor between husband and wife that is supposed to be "natural" and in which the husband earns wages and the wife takes care of the home and children. It also says that the primary function of the family is emotional. The French historian Philippe Aries' pioneering study shows that this idea and the family organization that accompanied it developed in the West late in the eighteenth century and was most fully articulated by urban middle-class families during the nineteenth century.

Although nineteenth-century writers equated the nuclear family with *the* family, there have been, and are, many different ways of organizing and defining families in the past and present. Among the European nobility or the gentry in colonial America, for example, families were primarily agencies for transmitting the property that was the basis of social and political power. Marriages secured alliances among powerful families. Children inherited land and so perpetuated a family name and its power from generation to generation. Love was not a reason or requirement for marriage. Parental attention did not center on children. Indeed, children were often raised by servants or sent off to live in other households, spending little time in the company of their parents. Emotional ties existed within families, but they were not a primary justification for a family's existence. The typically successful aristocratic family was the one whose marital and inheritance arrangements maintained wealth and power for the next generation.

But this was not the only family form in these societies. Peasant, farming, and craftsmen's families were also economic units, but of a different kind. They were centers of productive activity. Groups of people lived, worked, and ate together. In addition to blood relatives, servants and other non-kin were also considered part of the family. A recurrent peasant proverb in many parts of Eastern and Western Europe defined family

members as all those people eating from the same pot. The highest priority for these family members was to contribute labor or wages to the household. If a family couldn't support all its children, they were sent to another household to live, learn, and work. If a family needed more hands to work, it took others' children into the household. Though a division of labor according to age and sex certainly existed, it did not exclude married women from work. An eighteenth-century English poem advising a young girl about her future captured the attitude well:

> You cannot expect to marry in such a manner as neither of you shall have occasion to work, and none but a fool will take a wife whose bread must be earned solely by his labor and who will contribute nothing towards it herself.[1]

The ideal family arrangements for these people were those that best provided subsistence for all family members. The need of families for workers on the land or in the shop and their subsistence requirements created changing family arrangements with a range of different and sometimes unforeseen roles for individual family members.

In the history of the United States, stable nuclear families have been neither a consistent ideal nor a continuous reality. In periods when death or divorce rates are high, families consist of complex arrangements of adults and children. The historians Darrett and Anita Rutman have shown how parental death in the seventeenth century created families with complex mixes of natural and stepparents and their children. When a mother died in childbirth (a fairly common occurrence), the father would remarry. He might later become ill and die and his wife remarry. The children produced by these unions remained under the care of the living parents. In one household the Rutmans studied in Virginia between 1655 and 1693, there had been "six marriages among seven people" that produced 25 children. In 1680, there were living in this household children ranging in age from infancy to 20 who were the products of four marriages and some of whom had no parents in common. These

arrangements are similar to those we see today, when divorce and remarriage rates are high. The similarities suggest that households with various "step" relationships or single parents are not the product of late twentieth-century "decline," but a practical way of accommodating prevailing demographic or economic circumstances. Furthermore, they are recognized and experienced as families by their members, even if they don't live up to the ideal of what "the family" is supposed to look like.

If we look farther afield we find arrangements understood to be families that differ dramatically from the nuclear household ideal. In India, families have been organized as extended networks of kin living in the same household and incorporating many generations of married couples and their children. Alternatively, there are parts of Africa where marital and living arrangements do not coincide. Domestic units consist of mothers and their children, while fathers live elsewhere and may have a succession of different wives. Furthermore, property is not passed directly from parents to children, but from a mother's brothers to her daughters or sons.

The point of these examples is that the needs of subsistence, transmission of property, reproduction, and human connection can and have been met in a variety of ways. Ideals of families differ in different societies and so do the practical organizations differ from the ideals. There is no "natural" or "God-given" way to organize a family; family organization depends on cultural and social practices, on legal norms, on demographic and economic conditions, and on a host of other circumstances that have always made it a variable and changing institution.

Women's Work

What is the impact of women's work on their families? Are parenting and work incompatible activities for mothers? The answers vary according to historical periods, cultural beliefs about children's needs, and the circumstances under which women work.

Although throughout history, one of women's roles has been understood to be the bearing of children, they have not

always been considered to be entirely responsible for the raising of children. In preindustrial Europe, for example, when birth and infant death rates were very high, women spent most of their married lives bearing children. Yet this did not make child rearing a central preoccupation for them, and it did not preclude their engaging in other activities. Among the rich, children were sent to wet nurses and then raised by servants, while their mothers conducted the social business of family life. Among peasants and artisans, women incorporated the care of children into the chores of the day, which might include spinning or sewing, running a craft shop or family business, planting and harvesting, caring for domestic animals, going to market to buy or sell food. Women silk spinners in eighteenth-century Lyons (France) sent their infants to wet nurses rather than interrupt their lucrative trade, as did Parisian shopkeepers and artisans.

Among nineteenth-century factory workers — in the Staffordshire potteries in England, for example — child care was shared by parents. Often it was easier for women than men to find jobs and so (reported one observer),

> The men and boys appear to be willing to do their part in the domestic work of the home and it is no uncommon sight to find a man cleaning and sweeping, caring for the children and even putting them to bed in the evening. [2]

For middle-class families in this period, such an arrangement was considered a violation of a woman's duty to her children. These families accepted the belief that "woman's place is in the home," and they insisted that there was a necessary connection between the physical presence of the mother in the household and the quality of family relationships. But the children of working mothers do not seem to have shared this belief or to have experienced emotional deprivation. Observers of working families in nineteenth-century English textile towns, where mothers were employed in factories, noted that "bonds of affection were particularly strong between mothers and their children." [3] These bonds were based on the children's

sense of loyalty to a hardworking, caring mother.

Not only have middle-class views about children's needs differed for those of the working class, middle-class views themselves have changed over the past 200 years. In the United States, there have been periods (in the first half of the nineteenth century) when a mother's moral and educational influence was seen as primary. In the early twentieth century, emphasis shifted to her responsibility for children's health. More recently, it is the social and economic future of the child that is considered vital. These shifts in beliefs about what children need have led to shifts in middle-class ideals of mothers' roles. While morality and health were said to require a mother's presence in the household, education and training require additional funds. Part of a mother's job is now considered to be the provision of those funds, and many women have sought to fulfill the ideal of good motherhood by going out to work.

Indeed, the charge that middle-class women's decisions to seek employment represents a selfish desertion of family responsibilities is belied by study after study of women in the labor force. These reveal that the vast majority of women work either as the sole source of or as an important contributor to family income. They work to accumulate a down payment for a house, to maintain family living standards in the face of inflation, to pay for medical care, and to give their children a decent education. The economic stability of middle-class families now, as well as that of working-class families, often depends on a mother's wage-earning activity; when mothers don't or can't work, or when they can't earn enough, unstable and needy households are often the result.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the impact of women's *not* working comes from Linda Gordon's recent book on family violence in late nineteenth-century Boston. It shows how social workers' insistence on keeping mothers in poor families at home often led to continued abuse of children by a father or to the sending of children to orphanages or foster homes. When women were economically dependent they had no way to protect children or, for that matter, to feed them. If they had had paying jobs, however, their options would have

been better and their families stable.

The effect on families of mothers working depends on the circumstances of families and of the jobs women can find. Numerous studies from the nineteenth and twentieth century have borne this out. One of the earliest, done by Clara Collett, a social investigator in London in the 1890s, describes the possible varieties. The women who were best off, she found, were those who worked not from necessity but from choice. These women set the terms of their employment, and because their husbands also earned good wages, they could refuse drudgery or dangerous work. They might even be able to hire domestic help. The worst off were women who were the sole support of a family, usually widows, but also those whose husbands were injured, ill, or unemployed. These women had to work at whatever jobs they could find and they had to accept whatever wages were offered. They were most vulnerable to exploitation, the poorest, most desperate, and miserable of women workers in London. Collett's conclusions were echoed later by another study of women workers in London that concluded: "The grave drawback of much of the work done for money by married women is not that it is injurious in itself, but that it is scandalously ill-paid."[4]

The effects on children of their mothers working depends as well on circumstances — economic, social, and cultural. What is clear, from the historical record and from current experience, is that there is no necessary ill effect on children's well-being and on their relationships with their mothers. Memoirs from the nineteenth century eloquently substantiate this point. They reveal deep feelings of gratitude, admiration, and love by children for working mothers, even if the children were cared for by others while their mothers were at work. One woman attributed her morality to the influence of her mother: "I have had many temptations during my life, but my mother's face — her poor, tired face — always seemed to stand between me and temptation."[5]

All of this is not meant to idealize working-class family relationships in the past. Poverty, illness, and death often broke emotional as well as physical bonds, then as today. Indeed, it was most often grinding poverty — and *not* the daily absence

or presence of the mother — that disrupted families and made impossible sustained relationships among family members. And it was the quality of alternative care for children while mothers worked that made the difference in the child's experience and memory of what a mother's daily absence meant.

What then are my conclusions? First, the history of the family is the history of a varied, changing, adaptable institution. We must not confuse variations of organization with disintegration or breakdown. Second, whether women work to support their families or to find meaningful, productive activity, or both, their wage-earning activity does not in itself disrupt family stability or impoverish children emotionally. Indeed, historically, it has often had the opposite effect. Neither the work of women nor changes in family structure *cause* social problems in themselves. Rather, the attempt to impose idealized models of "the family" on diverse and changing families undercuts their ability to adapt to changing economic and social circumstances and so to survive.

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1 "A Present for a Servant Maid" (1743), quoted in Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution*, 1750-1850 (New York, 1930), pp. 1-2.

2 Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, British Parliamentary Papers 1904. Cited in Margaret Hewitt, *Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry* (London, 1958), p. 193.

3 Michael Anderson, *Family Structures in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971) p. 77

4 Clementina Black, *Married Women's Work* (London, 1915), p. 11.

5 Margaret Llewelyn Davies, ed. *Life As We Have Known It* (New York, 1975), p. 26

Commentary

The current day care dilemma is a topic of immense concern in all of the industrialized nations of the world. As historian Joan Scott points out in her overview of the history of families, the dilemma is related to contemporary concepts of the family, but families have not been fixed institutions through time. Over the ages, it is probable that more mothers have participated in the labor force while still raising children than have functioned exclusively as homemakers.

The origin of our current day care dilemma, however, may lie in a broader problem that also affects other areas of our culture, including education. Americans seldom dare to name this problem: It is that we as a people no longer seem to like, value, or cherish children or childhood.

If our culture were one that truly valued children and childhood, there would be no "day care dilemma." We would readily view every child as "our" child, and we would shelter, cherish, educate, celebrate, and protect all children. Instead, we view children as a "problem." We undervalue those who care for and educate children. We envy those who are "child free." We are reluctant to pay teachers adequately. And we often view parents who choose to stay home to rear their offspring as unserious people, at best, "lightweights" suited for "the mommy track" rather than the fast track; at worst, "welfare moms" or freeloaders.

Children in America seem to have been moved to the margins of our culture. To an extraordinary degree they are bombarded with messages that suggest that, as children, they are unfit and unacceptable members of our society. From Barbie, Ken, and G.I. Joe to Garbage Pail Kids and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, to clothing more suited to battlefields

and streetwalking than to childhood, we signal to children our sense that they must hurriedly pass out of childhood into adulthood.

Thus, in a sense, a choice has already been made by powerful interests. Whether by serving as drug runners in the urban drug market while still preteens, or by dressing as veterans of life's stresses, children are used by commercial interests and denied the nurture and care of sponsoring adults. They are molded into the shapes of adults instead of being allowed to fill these forms by themselves in measured growth.

Several factors may contribute to this situation. As America has ceased to be a largely agricultural nation or a nation of specialized craftspeople, the importance of children to their parents' economic enterprises has declined. Nowadays, children are a decided economic drain on parents, and they are seldom assigned critical roles or responsibilities in the home, much less in the community. Among the Navajo, children as young as five are assigned responsibility for protecting the families' flocks and are dignified thereby, and valued for their contribution to the group's well-being. Where children are removed from the central enterprises of the family and given no clear responsibilities but to stop being children and become young adults as quickly as possible, they are devalued, and their self-concepts are crippled. Not surprisingly, a large number of them appear to be growing up withdrawn, alienated, sometimes hostile, often silly.

American adults' fear of both "dependents" and of "dependence" may be an additional factor. Americans prefer to celebrate young adulthood — the carelessness, narcissism, and presumed freedom of those eighteen to thirty. We seem perplexed and perhaps alarmed by the softness, trust, and helplessness of children. In this way, the day care dilemma is also related to what is becoming our "elders care dilemma." Materialism, careerism, narcissism, and vocationalism can brook little competition from these needy ones, the children, the elders.

An analysis of these questions focused through the humanities can deepen our awareness of the implications of our history and our choices. Our understanding of the historical and philosophical contexts and consequences of our contemporary view

of children, of the issues that contribute to the day care dilemma and of the choices relating to its solution can be deepened by reading, discussion, and debate in which scholars in the humanities participate. Anthropologists can provide us with cross-cultural comparisons. Literature scholars can contribute to discussions concerning changing images and concepts of children, childhood, parenting, or work. Charles Dickens' novels, for example, still provide us with some of the most moving portraits of children and conflicts involving children, parenting, and work. Historians such as Joan Wallach Scott, along with philosophers, and specialists in religious studies, can also add to the analysis of the choices we face.

The state humanities councils can assist citizens' groups in organizing and implementing examinations of these and other dimensions of the day care issue. They can also help to address some underlying and perhaps even more-troubling problems. Through thoughtful discussion of our choices we can resolve the present day care dilemma. Through humanities-centered explorations we can gain a deeper understanding of the larger problem of which it may be a part.

Margaret Kingsland
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For Further Reading

Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*

Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence*

Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, *A Place in Time, Explicatus*

Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family*

Devastating Nature

by Donald E. Worster

How many slugs of vodka would it take to devastate Planet Earth? It should not be impossible to calculate. We now know how many drinks it took to send a hapless ship captain slumping to his berth, leaving an unlicensed mate in charge of the Exxon *Valdez* oil tanker, a bewildered and panicked novice who proceeded to drive that tanker across a submerged reef, tear a hole in its hull, and spill 11 million gallons of crude oil into pristine Prince William Sound of Alaska, killing perhaps hundreds of thousands of sea otters, herring and salmon, marine birds, and other living things.

"One drunken sailor" was a common lament after the spill, but in a spirit of truth and charity we must remember that sailors have been getting drunk since the Phoenicians — it's an old human weakness, one we are unlikely ever to overcome. We also ought to admit that in this case the sailor may have been driven to drink by the intense speedup and heavy overtime hours imposed by a corporation trying to cut costs. Whenever there is a disaster, it is tempting, especially for those in powerful positions, to look for a lone, flawed individual to take the rap.

The historian, however, resists that easy blaming; he tries to step back and discover the larger forces operating to magnify a private weakness into a social and ecological catastrophe. He wants to discover from the oily scum spreading over Prince William Sound an explanation for our growing environmental crisis on the globe, a clarification of its causes.

Surely as guilty as the captain are the men who employed him and who gave so many assurances to the public that they were competent to handle any spill if he failed. Exxon had

devised "the perfect system" of emergency response, as one observer put it, and it was impressively set forth in complete technical detail, 28 volumes thick, a plan prepared by experts and installed on company shelves with a great deal of hoopla. When the disaster came, the plan was useless; there was no equipment, no alertness, no moral urgency, to put it into play. The flaws that drove a man to overindulge were compounded by the flaws of overconfidence, stinginess, delay, and complacency that ran straight to the top of one of the largest multinationals in the world.

The bigger questions thus become: Why was Exxon, despite all its rational planning and command of expertise, so fundamentally careless? Why have governments and corporations everywhere — in Bhopal, India; Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania; Basel, Switzerland; Chernobyl, the Soviet Union; and so forth — behaved so irresponsibly toward the environment? And why have so many ordinary citizens living in the urban, industrial era done so much unwitting damage to earth's fabric of life and been so unconcerned about it? Why has carelessness in our dealings with nature become a way of life?

Explaining environmental destruction does not, in a sense, require a new or complicated theory. There is a history of such behavior going back all the way to Australopithecine ape-man. Forests burned down because ancient hunters fell asleep by their camp fires. Farmers starved by their own mismanagement of soils. We entered the world as an often greedy, shortsighted, violent, and capricious species and ever after have been depleting our game, eroding our lands, overpopulating our habitats, looking for easy ways to get ahead, and instead undermining our existence. Taken as individuals or as collectivities, we have never been free of imperfection or immune to its consequences. It may not flatter a contemporary executive, ensconced in an air-conditioned penthouse of chrome and glass, to think so, but he has all the potential for folly and darkness that his naked, unwashed ancestors had. The debacle in Prince William Sound expressed that old grim potential. It was waiting in our genes a million years ago.

Nonetheless, the human impact on nature has changed over

time, so that we cannot dismiss it with a glib phrase, "Things have always been that way." In fact, things are getting worse. If we are to understand the growing seriousness of environmental problems, there are some peculiar characteristics of modern people and their history that need confronting.

The most obvious change has been in the scale of the tools we wield. Over the last 300 years science has shown us how to construct increasingly more efficient ways to extract, ship, refine, process, and manufacture the goods and energy we consume. Fire was a potent, deadly tool for early man, but today we have dreamed up nuclear fission reactors, chlorinated hydrocarbons such as DDT, chain saws and logging mills, and a 987-foot tanker — longer than three football fields — that can float millions of gallons of oil from the Alaska pipeline to Los Angeles. Science has put into our flawed grasp a power that is unprecedented on the earth.

Commonly overlooked is the fact that such large, complicated technologies did not spring forth directly from any individual's brain. They required the research, capital, and labor of many people to bring them into being, and in turn those people required organization. Most of that organization in the United States has taken the shape of private, profit-seeking corporations, although like other nations, we are turning more and more to government to develop some of the most advanced technologies, such as those of the military and space exploration. Whatever the type of organization controlling science and technology, it is bound to be driven by the same old desires and ambitions for wealth, power, comfort, self-expression, national aggrandizement. But the very fact that it is a *modern* organization, which typically means a very *big* organization, has changed fundamentally the context, the meaning, and the expression of the old desires.

What Exxon wants these days is to be found nowhere near its New York City or Houston offices. It wants the black, viscous deposits of decayed marine life lying deep under the permafrost of the Arctic slope, and wants to mine and pump those deposits at a site some 4,000 direct-flight miles away from its board rooms. In other words, it wants something its officers may never have seen, nor had the slightest personal

relationship with: a substance that has become purely an abstraction — oil that can be translated into money. So do the consumers who buy the company's gasoline; they want an abstraction called mobility. To get that freedom to come and go at will, they have joined in exploiting a part of the earth that has no immediate presence or visibility or importance in their lives.

No wonder today's consumer has become so careless. He assumes that neither he nor his immediate neighborhood will suffer from the destructive consequences of his unleashed desires. The higher he climbs up the ladder of success, the farther he seeks to put himself from those consequences — from the pollution and ugliness he has caused. Only after intense public criticism did the chairman of Exxon decide to visit the scene of the oil spill, and then it was three weeks after it happened.

If that change in scale, that distancing of people from their sources of supply in nature, were not enough, there has also occurred a major shift in our thinking about ourselves. Call it a change in self-image. Many have come to believe that in the process of becoming so clever, rich, and powerful, they have also become superior creatures all-round. They are more rational than their ancestors. More trustworthy. More civilized.

That shift in self-image began in the so-called Age of Reason, which historians place approximately in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was the point of beginning for the scientific, economic, and industrial revolutions that have created the modern world.

The leading philosophers of that age began to celebrate the human mind and its potential for transforming the earth. If we could puzzle out the laws of gravity and celestial motion, if we could create a factory to spin thread and weave cloth, then it followed that we humans must surely be a very noble species. There is no end to what we can do. We are capable of the most elegant reasoning, the mostly astonishing technical wonders, freed from the corruptions of emotion, superstition, and vice. Potentially we are godlike in our intellectual endowment. As an American thinker, Elihu Palmer, remarked: "The organic constitution of man induces a strong conclusion that no limits

can justly be assigned to his moral and scientific improvements."

The most striking implications of that new optimism about human nature appeared in the field of economics. Heretofore, greed had been widely viewed as one of the worst human vices, requiring laws, regulations, and a general attitude of suspicion to keep it safely under control. But following the teaching of men like Adam Smith, greed came to be regarded, not as raw selfishness, but as the rational pursuit of self-interest, which is to say it became a virtue.

Each person was assumed to be the best judge of his or her welfare, capable of using reason to discover what that welfare entails; no one else could know it better. Let each, therefore, exercise the reason with which he or she has been endowed, seeking to maximize personal gain, and the whole society will benefit. This pursuit of rationalized greed came to be seen as the way to progress, or what we today call "growth." To promote progress and achieve growth, Smith and others of his day recommended, we should eliminate laws aimed at controlling selfishness, do away with social constraints on the individual. Set free from external interference, humans will advance toward a utopia of wealth and enlightenment for each and all.

The 1980s have been a time of harking back to the laissez-faire principles of Adam Smith, and nowhere more so than among the parties principally associated with the spilling of oil off the coast of Alaska. The federal government relaxed its regulation of the oil industry over the past decade; for example, the requirement that tankers have double hulls was dropped after lobbying by the oil companies. The consortium formed by those companies, the Alyeska Pipeline Service, dismissed its oil spill response team in 1981. The Coast Guard in Alaska began scaling back its marine traffic surveillance in 1984, apparently confident that the invisible hand of rational self-interest would keep all ships prudently on course. In a state where 85 percent of the public budget has been coming from oil revenues and taxes, there has been little inclination to ask unfriendly questions about the reliability of corporate self-interest. "We trusted them," said a state official. Such is the explanation heard all over Alaska these days as to why the spill

occurred; it is the plaint of the victimized, the innocent bystander who feels duped and misled by sharpies. But who really is the victim, and who is the criminal, in a culture where endless economic growth, deregulation and free enterprise, fast automobiles, and low taxes are the slogans that get votes? Did any group — the tanker crew, the corporations, the bureaucrats, or the voting majority of citizens — really prove trustworthy? Eleven million spilled gallons suggest the answer is no.

In the lost archaic world of hunters and gatherers the individual had to live with external restraints that we would find intolerable. There were social rules establishing when and where hunting was permitted and how it should be done (you should humbly approach your prey and ask its permission before taking its life). There were elaborate rituals and taboos, passed down generation after generation, embedded deeply in the religious life of the tribe, that were supposed to guide the individual in making a living. Procreation was not taken to be a private or unlimited right, but was carefully hedged about by a group-defined sense of environmental limits. A failure to maintain those collective checks on the wild disorder of private appetite might lead, it was feared, to destroying everybody's future.

Modern societies, in contrast, have celebrated the ideal of the self-reliant, self-determined individual set free from almost all restraints, whether those of nature or of society. We trust each other, we trust ourselves, far more than our ancestors did. Some of us want to extend that trust even farther, denouncing all laws, rules, traditions and pressure as illegitimate, or at best necessary evils.

Freedom and power have become, at least among the middle and upper classes, the modern idols. They are what we see reflected in the oily sheen on Prince William Sound and in so many other scenes of environmental deterioration, some of them sudden and dramatic like the spill, others slow and obscure like the global greenhouse effect. History and philosophy alike reveal that no merely technological solution, say, a new design of tankers or an advanced radar system, will begin to address the more profound forces underlying that deterioration. The source of our predicament lies in the simple fact that,

though we remain a flawed and unstable species, plagued now as in the past by a thousand weaknesses, we have in recent times tried to achieve both unlimited freedom and unlimited power. It would now seem clear that, if we want to stop the devastation of earth and the growing threats to our food, water, air, and fellow creatures, we cannot go on trying to maximize both. To retain freedom we must sacrifice some power. To hold onto the power we must surrender some of our freedom.

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Commentary

The poet from Alaska who directs the Alaska Humanities Forum, Gary Holthaus, describes the humanities as an ongoing conversation about matters of ultimate concern. The purpose of the state humanities councils, Holthaus suggests, is to draw even more people into this conversation. Essays like the one by Donald E. Worster, written as a supplement to the National Issues Forums book, *The Environment at Risk: Responding to Growing Dangers*, attempt to do just that.

People involved in the work of the state humanities councils throughout this country share the conviction that the disciplines of the humanities enlarge our understanding of public issues and help us to make wiser, longer-lasting policy decisions. History teaches us that all decisions and actions occur in a social and cultural context that determines, in part, not only what choices we make but also how we frame and think about the issues themselves. Literature connects us to others, offering insights into human aspirations and anxieties, many of which we may share, but all of which we should try to understand. Philosophy provokes us to rethink our most basic beliefs about the way the world is, to question what is practical in light of what is possible, and to give good reasons for what we think and say and do. These are matters of ultimate concern.

The environment matters ultimately, too. Although nature writing as a literary genre dates from at least the early 1800s, critical studies of the ways in which men and women regard the natural environment are a much more recent intellectual development. These studies, whether they are primarily histori-

cal, literary, or philosophical, largely have been spurred on by a growing awareness that modern methods of production and habits of consumption are gradually and perhaps irreversibly despoiling the earth.

Environmental historians like Donald E. Worster investigate our changing relationship to the environment over time. They show us how we got ourselves into our present predicament. Scholars and writers of environmental literature illuminate this relationship as well. Their stories express and evoke imaginings that arise from our recognition of nature's wonderfull-ness. Environmental philosophers explore the moral dimensions of our relationship to the environment. The central question of what has come to be called environmental ethics is whether, and with what justifications, we can ascribe to nature, to natural systems and even to individual natural objects, intrinsic worth — a worth that does not derive from their usefulness to humanity. If we can make this case, then we can argue that actions that are harmful to the environment, even if they harm no identifiable persons, may be nevertheless morally wrong.

There are, traditionally, two ways of looking at this issue. According to what the philosophers call the *anthropocentric* view, only human beings have intrinsic worth and so only human beings are morally considerable. The value of all other things is determined by the extent to which they help or harm human beings. In contrast, many environmentalists argue for a *biocentric* view in which human beings are a part of nature, not apart from nature, and nature itself has intrinsic value which deserves our respect. For those who adopt the biocentric view, environmental protection is not merely a social goal to be weighed in the balance with other social goals. It is much more like an inalienable right — a right that entails a moral obligation on our part not to pollute or destroy the environment if we can possibly avoid it.

Let me illustrate these two points of view with a story. Several years ago, while standing on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, a visitor from the East Coast was overheard complaining to the park ranger that it took her an entire day to drive over from the south rim, only to find, to her dismay, that "the view

is just the same. Why don't you build a bridge across the Canyon so people don't have to drive all the way around?" she asked plaintively. Without a moment's hesitation or a trace of a smile, the ranger replied, "Do you realize how difficult that would be? This canyon is a mile deep!"

Now if you sympathize with the tourist, or if you think that economic considerations should preclude building the bridge, whether or not it is possible technically, or even if you think that spanning the Grand Canyon with a bridge would detract from our experience of the Canyon's awesome beauty, then your attitude toward the environment is anthropocentric. If, on the other hand, you feel that there is something fundamentally wrong with both the tourist's question and the ranger's reply, if you believe that a bridge across the Grand Canyon would be a cosmic insult, a secular sacrilege, then your attitude toward the environment is biocentric.

If you are planning to organize or participate in a National Issues Forum, and you are interested in bringing historical, literary, and philosophical perspectives to bear on the issues you will be discussing, contact your state humanities council. The council can provide you with scholars who are practiced in the art of public discussion as well as other forms of assistance. Join in the ongoing conversation we call the humanities.

David Tebaldi
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For Further Reading

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*

J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England.*

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*

Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*

Tom Regan, ed., *Earthbound: New Introductory Essays in Environmental Ethics*

Holmes Rolston, *Philosophy Gone Wild: Essays in Environmental Ethics*

Mark Sagoff, *The Economy of the Earth: Philosophy, Law and the Environment*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*

Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*

Appendix

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